

SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

WRITINGS OF TRANSSEXUAL REVOLUTIONARY

SUSAN SAXAPHONE

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THE TIMES THEY ARE CHANGING

The weather report looks hot and exciting for 2008. The writer has been talking to the angry vets looking for the right drug to sooth their troubled memories, the angry street dykes fed up with the lies and pain they've been dealt by pimps and johns, hospitals and cops, listening to the shouts of high school kids, ready to yell Hell No We Won't Go. I know the reader has a store of tactics and knowledge and valuable experience. But do those resources seem useless and stale? A different situation and the same old bag of tricks can be given new life, seeing the young and listening to the stories of their

lives, carefully studying todays problems, analysing your own history. The streets of American cities offer unpredictable surprises. Public meetings and organizations need renewed life and have much to offer the jaded. Avoid the stale, hopeless, pour forth your energy into a new social movement. Let's pick up the pieces and honor the veterans of struggle. Let's invite those with open eyes to take on the fight. I ensure you it will be worth your time. Do what you do best, plot, plan, study, dream. That's what I'm doing.

The street dyke asked me to walk around the block with her this time. And we locked arms. At the end of the block panicking thugs started to block us. Keep moving no matter what. We ran for our lives, blocks away, high on the poetry, a free run of the city, a new chance to start over. The whole world is ours now: the streets, the airport, the bus
we can make it anywhere. Even here.

-- SUSAN SAXAPHONE, PO BOX 4726, BERKELEY CA
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Dear Editor:

I must protest your recent decision to gut my connections personal. The original ad ran: "Dog days around the corner -- Desperate transsexual woman I.S.O. someone clever, age 20-50, a little butch. I like the movie Dog Day Afternoon, goofy hats, wigs, sunglasses, passing love notes. Looking for thrills, love, or friendship." As this was the only transsexual personal for a weekly paper that serves a city with over 20,000 transgender people, I am offended you decided to cut my ad, which I placed for political reasons. Over 75% of transsexual women in San Francisco are not fully employed, and our state does not provide the health care, protection from violence, and housing transsexuals, like all people, need to live with dignity. Dog Day Afternoon is a dramatization of the holdup of a Chase Manhattan Bank in Brooklyn on August 22, 1972, by John Wojtowicz, in an attempt to provide his lover Elizabeth Debbie Eden with the sex change operation she needed. Wojtowicz was wounded by police shooting after negotiators promised him safe passage out of the country. Thirty five years later, most American transsexuals face the same old fucking shit. I condemn the state for this treachery and for failing to provide for the basic needs of transsexuals. I condemn the Guardian for interfering with my request for assistance in obtaining the funds necessary for a sex change operation and related procedures and breaking out of my isolation and loneliness. I praise all desperate women fighting to ensure their survival, in prison, in San Francisco, and the rest of the world. I appreciate and thank all the allies who fight, like Wojtowicz, and do not shrug their shoulders or laugh at the condition of transsexual women.

-- SUSAN SAXAPHONE, P.O. BOX 4726 BERKELEY CALIFORNIA

UNSCREW THE LOCKS FROM THEIR HINGES
UNSCREW THE DOORS THEMSELVES FROM THEIR JAMBS
WHOEVER DEGRADES ANOTHER DEGRADES ME

-- WALT WHITMAN, Song of Myself, Leaves of Grass

These lines are a challenge to the ugly persistent invidiousness found in the U.S., on every block, in every neighborhood. Think twice before mindlessly insulting the ones who are down, before looking for the cheap insults, attacking tastes, languages, weaknesses, lifestyles. In short, anything that creates discomfirt and challenges you to break with the aloof alienation, passivity, and savageness so typical of professionals and the like, those qualities that push you to follow the example of the rich and attack the weak.

Instead, enter into the daily struggles and processes of transformation. This can break the isolation and improve the quality of your life. Look to the models of communal living, look to your community, look long and hard at the lines at the top of this leaflet and think fucking twice before you mock them, mock and destroy the crash pad, mock free food in the park, mock the helpless, mock anyone with an open heart. Only a fool would mock those who experience daily the poison of the world and make efforts to alleviate the poison. Only fools would chain the doors of change, fools or those wasting away in complacency and self-absorption. In better times such fools will be swept away and viewed with hilarity.

ANOTHER GAY MANIFESTO

The writer met a shaken young man on the BART train, bitterly cursing the police and asking her to write a manifesto denouncing the Castro Special Police. After a quick conversation about the details of the incident I agreed to give it a shot.

The scene is the Pink Party in the Castro, on June 23, where our anonymous broke Cal grad is dancing his little heart out, inspired by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to indulge himself at the corner of sixteenth and market. He wildly dances his way into a well known cafe, dancing to the rhythm of the beat of his heart, when he is apprehended by Special Police on a nancy reagan power trip. The special police diagnose the boys bacchanalian fervor of Gay Pride as part of the Speed Plague being purged Stalin-style with social realism posters, community meetings, self denunciations, and special police with arrest quotas. They handcuff the boy and interrogate him. The surprisingly innocent yet trashy boy didn't even know what speed was until the police introduced him to the drug. Now he is obsessed with discovering what the fuss could, all be about, and it's left to the writer alone to convince him it's dull and to focus on his future.

Other activities of the Special Police during Pride Weekend, according to the SF Bay Times, included two marijuana possession busts and a futile search for gang activity using billy clubs and paddy wagons. The police are especially vigilant in busting queers on the street. The Guardian reported in the June 23 issue on a trans woman entrapped by an undercover officer and arrested for selling him an ounce of marijuana. The agent approached the woman and tried to buy crack. She gracefully offered him the small amount of grass she had for her own use, only to be hauled off to jail.

It would be kind of cool if San Francisco's police focused on keeping bodies from getting dumped on Army Street instead of trying to clean up the city. Unfortunately the police work to promote the smooth functioning of business interests and don't have time to protect the unique human lives of San Francisco.

Arrests for drugs lead to false testimony from desperate individuals and clog the overcrowded prisons. Drug busts corrupt the police, take for example Berkeley Police's problems with stealing heroin from the evidence room. Do you think those officers will go to jail, or rehab?

Of course these problems are nothing new, the history of existing society being a history of struggle between classes...


Dear Howard Zinn,

I attended the play "Marx in Soho" in a southern town two years ago, looking forward to a warm evening with others interested in Marx. However, I was bitterly dissatisfied. Your revisionist Marx's apology for Religion was a crowd pleaser. However, while the majority of the audience clapped and cheered, the transsexual cried and jeered.

To cut to the chase, your fluffy Marx whines about how no one reads the complete text, and I argue that you failed to read even the next sentence of Marx's Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. This is an inexcusable mistake for a leftist professor writing a play about Marx. Appreciation of your play must only be possible because of the ignorance of American and British audiences.

The apology for religion undermines both the understanding of the historical role of the Christian church in Europe and the Middle East and the growing amount of land, wealth, and power controlled by religious organizations. Along with the reactionary work of Michael Lerner, you are an aging New Left white male going against the current, wading backwards against the struggle that must be undertaken to make society bearable. Imagine the southern town where abortion doctors were murdered, former Nazis run sexually abusive half-way houses for teenagers, and colleges teach anti-gay street preaching. Is it productive to let the crowd indulge in this opiate? Will it solve their problems? They should kick the habit, and you should as well.

I will close with the quote from Marx that you, ignorantly or willfully, omitted: "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness." This is good, your play is shit.



BOOK REVIEWS

MARX ON SUICIDE BY KARL MARX

This essay shows Marx's concern for problems usually considered as psychological in origin. The reader gets a glimpse of his thoughts about the corrosive nature of family in European society and the subjection of women and his repulsion at the abuse of authority. He lays the guilt and blame on the doors of social institutions rather than on the graves of suicides.

Marx translated excerpts of the memoirs of a Paris police statistician, adding some his own commentary. He praises the warm humanism and careful research of the moderate French official and contrasts it with early German and English socialists somewhat lacking in these respects.

Marx's curiosity about these problems demonstrates how hungry he was for new developments in areas currently classified as feminism and psychology, and his scorn for Marxists who are contemptuous of such developments.

I found the argument that suicide is a brave act demolishes the misconception that suicide is cowardly. The perception that suicide is often an act of protest is relevant to the proven effectiveness of hunger strikes, suicidal military efforts, suicide bombings, and individual acts in disturbing existing social relations. I enjoyed seeing these unusual claims justified in sharp exciting strokes that demonstrate briefly Marx's brilliance.

OUTLAW WOMAN BY ROXANNE DUNBAR ORTIZ

The second book in Dunbar-Ortiz's trilogy of memoirs, OUTLAW WOMAN tells the exciting story about the Okie woman's break with the isolation of middle class married life to become a feminist and a revolutionary. If you are at a loss for how to carry on, the ups and downs, pitfalls and triumphs of this memoir contain many lessons for today's activists and organizers.

MUSIC REVIEWS

TOM ROBINSON BAND This bands double LP has many songs inspiring to gay lib types, IT'S GONNA BE A LONG HOT SUMMER FROM NOW ON gets me going, the sentiment of permanent revolution is inspiring to a street fighter. The morose GLAD TO BE GAY depicts the emotional difficulties of being constantly targeted. LITTLE RED CORTINA puts us in the head of working class late 70's English Fag depression.

GREEN DAY WARNING The band shows sometimes you can see America better from the windows of a tour bus than from a soccer mom's mini-van as the songwriting is lucid and mature, the songs deal with the frustrations of marriage, the pleasures of blood sex and booze, the misery of lot lizards and street people, criticism of anorexic fashion victims. The Band pledges allegiance to the underworld, one nation under dog. My kind of guys they rock the bay, and the nation. I love seeing construction workers go at it to Green Day, We Built This City on Flower Power Psycho Rock and Roll. All Right!

GRUMPIES WEATHER GIRL This 7" record from Mississippi is a surprise hit in my offices, politics are boring but the weather is cool, yeah we occasionally get burnt out on politics and hard work don't you? Especially when dealing with frustrating, aggressive, disorganized wreckers with no imagination.... We take off our boots, draw a bath, and sit intently in front of the record player or radio... I don't mind but I'm never gonna be you're girl, ROCKET GIRL, yeah.

WARREN ZEVON We like the song SEND LAWYERS, GUNS, AND MONEY... please fall in love with me in Havana, Zimbabwe, Capetown, Mexico City, and have your daddy or friends take care of us when we get into trouble.... it's my

JOHN LENNON/YOKO ONO DOUBLE FANTASY Life is perfect then you get assassinated and the whole world gets destroyed by yuppies and Ronald Reagan, well Nicaragua got hit hardest and they survived, democratic, Ortega president again, we can too. HARD TIMES ARE OVER if we work for it and don't get shot.

END OF THE WORLD NEWS This hard driving snotty punk seven inch takes us back to that two months Leon Trotsky spent in New York with his boys. Yesterday, All our troubles seemed so far away, man enjoy this album it's an amenity.



WHEREAS recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

WHEREAS disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

WHEREAS it is essential, if man is not to be oppressed by man's machine, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

WHEREAS it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

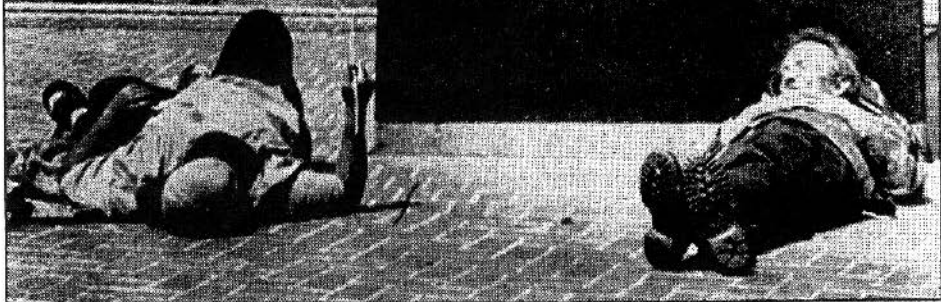
WHEREAS the members of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

WHEREAS member states have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

WHEREAS a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

AND, THEREFORE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROCLAIMS THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

AS A COMMON STANDARD OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL PEOPLES AND ALL NATIONS, TO THE END THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND EVERY ORGAN OF SOCIETY, KEEPING THIS DECLARATION CONSTANTLY IN MIND, SHALL STRIVE BY EDUCATION AND EDUCATION TO PROMOTE FURTHER FOR THEIR RESPECT AND PROMOTION, AND BY PROGRESSIVE MEASURES, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL, TO SECURE THEIR UNIVERSAL AND EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION AND OBSERVANCE, SUCH AS TO THE PEOPLE OF MEMBER STATES THROUGHOUT AND AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THROUGHOUT UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION.



Homeless people sleep in San Francisco at the base of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that all people have the rights to housing, food, medical care, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability and old age.

Lydia Gans
photo